

## Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 LONDON 07034 01 OF 02 291634Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 IO-13  
/084 W

-----291636Z 054776 /41

P 291619Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3260  
INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST  
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 07034

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK  
SUBJECT: ASHFIELD AND GRIMSBY BY-ELECTIONS SPLIT,  
BUT FORM REVERSED

REF: LONDON 6840

SUMMARY - LABOR SURPRISINGLY HELD ITS GRIMSBY SEAT WHILE SUFFERING A STUNNING LOSS TO THE CONSERVATIVES IN ASHFIELD. AT THIS POINT WE CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT: CONDITIONS PECULIAR TO A CONSTITUENCY ARE OF FAR GREATER IMPORTANCE IN BY-ELECTIONS THAN IN GENERAL ELECTIONS; THE LABOR GOVERNMENT REMAINS UNPOPULAR WITH MANY OF ITS TRADITIONAL SUPPORTERS; AND LABOR'S ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE VOTER TURNOUT. BEYOND THESE TRUISMS, WE WOULD SAY THAT THE TACTICAL ADVANTAGE WENT MARGINALLY TO THE TORIES, BUT LABOR GAINED THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE. AS FOR THE LIBERALS, THEY JUST LOST. END SUMMARY.

1. THE RESULTS OF THE ASHFIELD (WON BY THE CONSERVA-  
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LONDON 07034 01 OF 02 291634Z

TIVES) AND GRIMSBY (WON BY LABOR) BY-ELECTIONS CON-  
FOUNDED POLITICIANS, PUNDITS, BOOKIES AND POLITICAL  
OFFICERS ALIKE. THEY WERE A STARTLING REVERSAL OF  
FORM (REFTEL).

2. AT ASHFIELD, TORY TIM SMITH UPSET THE FAVORED  
MICHAEL COWAN, WIPING OUT A 23,000 LABOR GENERAL ELEC-

TION MAJORITY TO WIN BY 264 VOTES. THE TURNOUT WAS LOW -- 60 PERCENT -- FOR THE AREA, REFLECTING POPULAR DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE LOST HIS DEPOSIT, BUT HIS SHARE OF THE VOTE DID NOT FALL AS SHARPLY AS THAT OF HIS COLLEAGUES IN STETCHFORD AND GRIMSBY. THE NATIONAL FRONT (NF) CANDIDATE POLLED OVER 1700 VOTES, PRESUMPTIVELY FROM TRADITIONAL LABOR VOTERS, SOMEWHAT HIGH FOR AN AREA NOT HAVING A SIZABLE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY. MOST OBSERVERS, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THE NF GAVE DISGRUNTLED LABOR VOTERS A CHANNEL (OTHER THAN ABSTENTION) TO REGISTER THEIR DISSATISFACTION.

3. AT GRIMSBY, THE LABOR CANDIDATE, TV PERSONALITY AUSTIN MITCHELL, FOOLED MOST OBSERVERS BY NARROWLY DEFEATING THE FAVORED CONSERVATIVE, ROBERT BLAIR, AND HOLDING THE SEAT FOR LABOR BY 520 VOTES. THE TURNOUT IN GRIMSBY, AS SUGGESTED BY THE EARLIER MANIFESTED INTEREST IN THE ELECTION, WAS HIGHER THAN IN THE LAST GENERAL ELECTION -- 70 PERCENT -- WHICH WAS MOST UNUSUAL. THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE, WHO HAD POLLED 20 PERCENT OF THE VOTE AT THE GENERAL ELECTION, WAS SQUEEZED FROM BOTH SIDES AS HIS SHARE DROPPED TO LESS THAN 7 PERCENT. INTERESTINGLY, THE LIBERAL VOTE IN GRIMSBY SEEMED TO DIVIDE FAIRLY EVENLY BETWEEN THE LABOR AND TORY CANDIDATES. THIS WAS AT VARIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL TENDENCY FOR LIBERAL VOTERS TO MOVE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 LONDON 07034 01 OF 02 291634Z

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 LONDON 07034 02 OF 02 291635Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 LAB-04 IO-13 /075 W  
-----291637Z 054820 /41  
P 291619Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3261  
INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST  
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 07034

WORKER CANDIDATE DREW 250 VOTES, AND THE TWO INDEPENDENTS LESS THAN ONE HUNDRED BETWEEN THEM.

4. LABOR PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY RON HAYWARD CHARACTERIZED THE GRIMSBY RESULT AS A MAJOR VICTORY, BUT ADDED THAT ASHFIELD WAS "A DISASTER". CONSERVATIVE LEADER MARGARET THATCHER WAS NOT QUOTED CONCERNING THE GRIMSBY RESULT, BUT CLAIMED THAT ASHFIELD WAS "ONE OF THE GREATEST BY-ELECTION VICTORIES OF ALL TIME".. THE MEDIA USED SUCH WORDS AS "ASTONISHING","EXTRAORDINARY" AND "SHOCKING" TO CHARACTERIZE THE OUTCOME, WHILE POLITICAL ANALYSTS WERE UNABLE TO FIND ANY APPARENT PATTERN IN IT.

4. COMMENT: WHAT CAN BE MADE OF SUCH AN UNEXPECTED RESULT IN TWO BY-ELECTIONS? AS THE ANALYSTS HAVE NOTED, THERE IS NO DISCERNABLE PATTERN OTHER THAN THE MARKED DECLINE IN THE LIBERAL VOTE, AND THAT WAS TO BE EXPECTED, EVEN IF THERE WERE NO GOVERNMENT/LIBERAL ACCORD. BEYOND THAT, WE CAN ONLY DRAW THREE CONCLUSIONS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LONDON 07034 02 OF 02 291635Z

EM TO BE POLITICAL TRUISMS IN BRITAIN:  
LOCAL FACTORS ARE OF FAR GREATER SIGNIFICANCE IN BY-ELECTIONS THAN IN GENERAL ELECTIONS; CALLAGHAN'S GOVERNMENT REMAINS UNPOPULAR, ESPECIALLY AMONG TRADITIONAL LABOR SUPPORTERS; AND LABOR'S ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE VOTER TURNOUT. MRS. THATCHER WAS NOT FAR OFF THE MARK IN DESCRIBING THE ASHFIELD BY-ELECTION -- IT WAS ONE OF THE GREATEST BY-ELECTION UPSETS OF ALL TIME. ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT, HOWEVER, IS DILUTED (OR, FROM THE LABOR VIEWPOINT. ATTENUATED) BY LABOR'S WIN IN GRIMSBY. THE POLITICAL ADVANTAGE ACCRUING TO THE CONSERVATIVES IS ALMOST CERTAINLY SHORT-TERM, WITH LABOR HAVING GAINED THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE. THE GRIMSBY WIN GIVES THEM THE INCUMBENCY ADVANTAGE (GENERALLY CALCULATED AT BETWEEN 500 AND 1000 VOTES) IN A CLOSE RACE AT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, AT WHICH TIME THE ASHFIELD MINERS ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO REVERT TO THEIR TRADITIONAL LABOR WAYS.

SPIERS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ELECTION RESULTS, PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 29-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977LONDON07034  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770150-0673  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** LONDON  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1977/newtext/t1977045/aaaaadsl.tel  
**Line Count:** 172  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** ebdccba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 77 LONDON 6840  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 11-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2784761  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ASHFIELD AND GRIMSBY BY-ELECTIONS SPLIT, BUT FORM REVERSED  
**TAGS:** PINT, PGOV, UK  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/ebdccb3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009